Current Themes in Psychiatry 1

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Preface

This book is based on a selection from the lectures delivered at Bexley Hospital in September 1976 at the tenth of a bi-annual series of courses for Senior Psychiatrists. A comprehensive overview of current psychiatric knowledge is not intended, but we have tried to strike a reasonable balance in representing the diverse fields of recent enquiry and concern. We have chosen to focus on contemporary thinking, and research reviews, rather than on original research reports. We think that such a focus will meet a major need of the busy general psychiatrist: to keep abreast of developments on many fronts in a rapidly changing field. The book should also prove useful to psychiatrists preparing for higher examinations, and to colleagues in allied disciplines with a special interest in psychiatry.

The variety of contributions makes it hard to trace common themes, except in the most general terms. Perhaps the most striking is the multi-faceted approach to the understanding of psychological phenomena and the treatment of psychiatric disorder. Psychology, biology, physiology, pharmacology, all contribute, and eclecticism in treatment, with increasing concern for both effectiveness and economy, is the order of the day. Common to all the chapters is the attention given to clinical applications.

Our grouping of chapters into sections has, of necessity, been somewhat arbitrary with inevitable overlaps. However, we felt that these drawbacks were outweighed by the benefits of easier accessibility and lesser unwieldiness. We have tried to avoid repetition, but that too could not entirely be eliminated without doing injury to the arguments of separate contributors who happened to use similar reasoning or quote similar evidence in presenting their topic.

This volume is the first of a series. In future editions we will seek to compensate for the omissions that are unavoidable in a volume of this size and to update the content as new knowledge and thinking emerge.

Finally, we would like to thank those senior psychiatrists who attended the courses and gave us valuable feedback on the content and style of the lectures. Without their help we could not have been so confident in our task. We hope this book will stimulate as well as inform.

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Foreword

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Psychiatry is a rapidly developing subject and for a number of years courses have been provided at Bexley Hospital, Kent, for senior psychiatrists. These courses fill a real need and have always been well attended. This book comprises a selection of the papers given during one of the courses, by established experts, relating to current themes and problems in psychiatry, and will be invaluable for the busy doctor who may have difficulty in keeping up with advances in psychiatry.

The topics covered are very interesting and of considerable diversity, ranging from highly topical matters, such as kidnapping and hostage-taking, discussed by a world authority on the subject, to psychopathy, aspects of schizophrenia and policy and mental health planning. There are also interesting contributions on the affective disorders, various aspects of the neuroses, dependency problems, psychosomatic and somatopsychic interactions, and problems of epidemiology and classification.

The final part of the book presents accounts of various forms of psychological treatment and various aspects of physical therapies in psychiatry.

This volume will be of great interest and benefit both to senior psychiatrists and to psychiatrists in training. It will also be of value to physicians and to others interested in the rapidly developing field of psychiatry.

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